registered a decline in profits. The profits (after tax)/losses in SAIL, RINL and TISCO, during the last two years, are given below:—

(Rupees in Crores)

Steel Plants	1996-97	1997-98
SAIL	515.17	132.99 *
RINL	(-) 148.38 **	(-) 304.14 **
TISCO	469.21	322.08

* Provisional ** Unaudited (-) Loss

(c) and (d) The Department of steel periodically reviews the performance of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) under its administrative control including the special & current areas of concern etc.

The main reasons identified for decline in profits in SAIL include slow down in demand for steel, greater competition from imports, and enhancement in supplies in domestic market. Further, the profits were adversely affected by increase in input prices primarily of coking coal, petroleum products, power, transportation and higher interest cost which could not be fully neutralised by better techno-economic parameters, cost reduction measures and increase in the prices of steel, etc.

Amendments in MMRD Act, 1957

4400. DR. MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether central Government are considering amendments in the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 and Mineral Concession Rules, 1960, particularly, with a view to delegate more powers to the State Governments; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken in this regard and by when the amendments are likely to be made?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Central Government constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India with Mining Secretaries of State Governments of Orissa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Assam and Himachal Pradesh, Secretary General, Federation of Indian Mineral Industries and Controller General, Indian Bureau of Mines etc. as Members. The terms of reference of the Committee, *inter-alia*, included review of the existing laws and procedures governing regulation and development of minerals and to recommend steps to make them compatible with the policy changes and to suggest steps to reduce delays in grant/renewal of Prospecting licences/ Mining leases. The Committee was also to consider and suggest further delegation of powers to the State Governments regarding grant/renewal of Prospecting licences/Mining leases and measures to be taken to prevent illegal mining. The Committee has submitted its report to the Government and further necessary action has already been initiated.

Approval for Grant of Minerals Concessions

4401. DR. MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that clearance of proposals from the State Governments seeking Central Government's approval for grant of minerals concessions for minerals specified in the parts of A and C of the first Schedule appended to the MMRD Act, usually takes long time; and

(b) the State-wise list showing number of cases pending for Central Government's approval?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL & MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS):(a) and (b) Mineral Concessions are granted as per provisions of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 and Rules made thereunder by the State Governments concerned. Proposals for approval of mineral concessions for minerals specified under the First Schedule of the aforesaid Act originate from the respective State Governments and are processed and disposed of by the Central Government as per provisions of law. All efforts are being made to expedite approval of Central Government. Incertain cases the